

## **KASHMIRI MUSLIMS: A VISION DOCUMENT**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Apart from the union territory of Lakshadweep, Jammu and Kashmir is another region within the territorial limits of India, where Muslims can be found in a significant majority. But the sad part of this Muslim face region is that it has remained eternally a conflict zone which has denied the upliftment of people in different parameters of life. The people living in this part of land have bore the brunt of the continuous friction of two nuclear weapon states which has deeply shattered the human development of the region. Kashmir has been regarded as the nuclear flashpoint of the South-Asian region. Kashmiri Muslims who were quite supportive and faithful of India's rule in Kashmir in 1947 gave slogans like "Jo Maange Ga Pakistan, Usko Mile Ga Qabristan" (whosoever will demand Pakistan, will be sent to graveyard). Yet the same people after 1987 raised their heads, hands and everything against India and gave slogans like "Jeevay Jeevay Pakistan, Ragdro Ragdro Hindustan (Long live Pakistan, push back India). This paper will seek a logical enquiry and find out how far we are responsible for the alienation of our own citizens. This paper will also focus on the relationship between Muslims in the rest of India and Kashmiri Muslims and it will try to explore, why even today Mughal Emperor Akbar is regarded as the first invader of Kashmir and why Indian Muslims never break their silence for their counterparts when Kashmiri Muslims are suffering from state, non-state as well as external actors.

**KEYWORDS:** Alienation, Kashmiriyat, Militancy, Papa Two and Plebiscite

### **INTRODUCTION**

Prior to the introduction of Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism had been the main religions prevalent in Kashmir. Islam was first introduced in Kashmir by Syed Sharaf-ud-Din Abdur Rahman Suhrawardi popularly known as Bulbul Shah to common masses. He was an extensively travelled preacher and came to Kashmir during the reign of Raja Suhadeva (1301–20). Impressed by Bulbul Shah's simplicity and noble character, King Rinchan Shah the ruler of Kashmir accepted Islam and came to be known as Sultan Sadrudin Shah. He was the first Muslim ruler of Kashmir. Following Rinchan's conversion his brother-in-law who was the army commander in chief also became Muslim. Subsequently according to some traditions ten thousand Kashmiris adopted Islam and hence the seeds of Islam in Kashmir were sown. The spread of Islam among Kashmiris was further boosted by arrival of a host of other Sayyids, most prominent among them being Sayyid Jalal-ud-Din, Sayyid Taj-ud-Din and Sayyid Hussain Simanani. However the greatest missionary whose personality wielded the most extraordinary influence in the spread of Islam in Kashmir was Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani of Hamadan (Persia) popularly known as Shah-i-Hamadani. He belonged to the Kubrawi order of Sufis and came to Kashmir along with seven hundred disciples and helpers. His emphasis was on the Islamization of royal family and the court as a pre-requisite for Islamizing people. This was an important modus operandi adopted by Syed Ali and his disciples. He was of the firm belief that the common masses followed the conduct and culture of their rulers. His disciples established shrines with lodging and langar at many places in Kashmir which served as centres for propagation of Islam. His preaching resulted in a

colossal number of Kashmiri people and priestly Hindu gurus along with thousands of their followers converting to Islam which became the vastly dominant religion of the Kashmiri masses by the fourteenth century. Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani's impact in Kashmir was not only confined to religion but had a great say on culture, industry and economy of Kashmir. Spread of shawl making, carpet manufacturing, cloth weaving, etc. gained great prominence by his efforts.

### **Understanding Kashmiri Muslims and their Issues**

Jammu and Kashmir represents immense ethno-cultural and religious diversity. Distinct communities are bound together within the territorial limits of three principle regions of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh speaking three main languages namely Kashmiri, Dogri and Ladakhi respectively. Besides, religious structure of the state mirrors a plural universe of Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Christianity, Buddhism and Jainism. Though Muslims are concentrated in Kashmir region, Jammu and Ladakh regions also have some percentage of them. Kashmir's first encounter with New Delhi was witnessed way back in 1586 when Mughal emperor Akbar imprisoned Yusuf Shah Chak, the last local king of Kashmir. Since then Kashmir has been ruled by outsiders Afghans, Sikhs and Dogras. The capture of Yusuf Shah by the emperor Akbar is viewed by Kashmiris as a betrayal, one that characterized the subsequent occupations that continued till today. He (King) was exiled and imprisoned in the fort of Allahabad by the emperor Akbar after having been invited for what he believed was a negotiation. After Mughals, Kashmir was ruled by Afghans till 1819. From 1819 to 1846 it was ruled by Sikhs under Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his successor Daleep Singh.

### **The Treaty of Amritsar and Sale Deed of Kashmir**

On March 16<sup>th</sup> 1846, the politico-administrative unification of Jammu And Kashmir State was made possible by the treaty of Amritsar. Kashmir was sold by the British to Maharaja Gulab Singh for peanuts. The cost paid by Maharaja Gulab Singh for the Paradise on Earth and vast territories attached to it was seventy-five lakhs of rupees (Nanukshahee), fifty lakhs to be paid on or before the 1<sup>st</sup> October of the current year, A.D., 1846. Selling the Paradise on Earth for one million pounds along with all animate and inanimate beings and one horse, twelve shawl goats of approved breed (six male and six female) and three pairs of Kashmiri shawls as a token of reorganization of British supremacy was too cheap a deal. This cheap deal had such a big psychological impact that people were sold along with their flora and fauna like cattle's unparalleled in the entire world history with no mention of their rights. Even poet of east Allama Iqbal vehemently criticized it as this couplet bears testimony.

*Aaj woh Kashmir hai mehkoom-o- majboor-o- faqeer*

*Kal jissey ahle nazar kehtey thay Iran-e-Sagheer*

(Now the same Kashmir is under every sort of subjugation

Which till yesterday was termed as mini-Persia?)

### **Partition, Accession and Assimilation**

In august 1947, the British colony of India was partitioned. The nations of India and Pakistan came into existence; Jammu and Kashmir wedged between them. It was an independent princely state, ruled by a king, Maharaja Hari Singh. The Maharaja of Kashmir did not want to merge with India and tried to negotiate with India and Pakistan in order to have an independent status for his state. He even signed a standstill agreement with Pakistan. Pakistani leaders thought that Kashmir belonged to Pakistan since majority population of the state was Muslim. They regarded Kashmir as the 'K' of

Pakistan, and Jinnah called it as the Jugular vein of Pakistan. But this was not the sentiment or perception of Kashmiri people; they thought of themselves as Kashmiris above all. It was this sentiment of the Kashmiri Muslims which protected them from the communal frenzy of partition catastrophe which by then was the norm of the day in the whole of north- India. It was none other than the father of the nation Mahatma Gandhi who recognized this virtue and said, "Islam and Hinduism are being put in a real test only in Kashmir....today in the whole benighted sub-continent, I find a ray of hope coming only from Kashmir." It is a documented fact that in 1947, Muslims avoided going into an area where mainly Hindus and Sikhs lived; similarly Hindus and Sikhs stayed away from the areas of Muslim predominance elsewhere in India; Kashmir was the only island of peace where not a single non-muslim was touched even in remotest village. The popular movement in the state led by Shiekh Abdullah of the National Conference wanted to get rid of Maharaja, but was against the joining of Pakistan. The National Conference was secular organization and had a long association with Congress. Sheikh Abdullah was a personal friend of some of the tallest nationalist leaders including Nehru.

In October 1947, Pakistan sent tribal infiltrators from its side to capture Kashmir. This forced the Maharaja to ask for Indian help. India extended the military support and drew back the infiltrators from the Kashmir valley, but only after Maharaja signed the instrument of accession with the government of India. No aid without accession was India's position at that time and Maharaja who was kept with very little options signed the accession. But the accession was conditional as it was agreed in a letter sent by Mountbatten, the then Governor General of India, that once the situation normalizes the views of the people of Jammu and Kashmir will be ascertained about their future. When Pt. Nehru made his historical address in Lal Chowk and promised, "We don't want forced engagements and forced accessions as this is not what the democracy teaches to is, surely the will of Kashmir will be decided by Kashmiris through an independent plebiscite. If they decided to part their ways, we can have our own ways and they can have their own ways." Since then the politics of Jammu and Kashmir has remained controversial and conflict ridden both for external and internal reasons. Externally Pakistan has always claimed that Kashmir valley should be the part of Pakistan. As we mentioned above, Pakistan sponsored a tribal invasion in 1947, as a consequence of which one part of the state came under Pakistani control. India claims that this area is under illegal occupation. Pakistan described this area as Azad Kashmir. Internally there is a dispute about the status of Kashmir within the Indian union. Kashmir was given a special status under article 370 of the Indian constitution which gives greater autonomy to the state as compared to other states of the Indian union. The state has its own separate constitution drafted by the state constituent assembly, own flag and as per the original text of article 370 only two articles of the Indian constitution (Article 1 and 370) on its own were applicable to the state. Rest could have been made applicable at the concurrence of the state legislature with full ratification of the state constituent assembly. But like denial of plebiscite even article 370 was not spared and was eroded number of times by subsequent Presidential Orders. Hence if we agree with A.G. Noorani we cannot deny the fact that article 370 is nothing than a dead letter as maximum provisions (more than 338 articles of the Indian constitution) have been made applicable to the state. Mistrust emerges, so long as Jammu and Kashmir could have gone anywhere, the Indian leadership came up with various promises of autonomy but once it became clear that legally Jammu and Kashmir has become a part of India, it has been assimilated more and more by eroding its autonomy.

### **Politics Since 1948**

After taking over as the prime minister, Shiekh Abdullah initiated land reforms and other major policies which benefitted ordinary people. But, there was a growing difference between him and the central government about his position

on Kashmir status. He was dismissed in August 1953 and kept in detention for a number of years. Sheikh Abdullah was the main force behind the instrument of accession and it was under his secular and nationalist leadership that Kashmiris willingly joined Indian union. But, the treatment meted out to him alienated masses and was the first nail in the coffin of Kashmiri separatism. The leadership that succeeded did not enjoy much popular support and was able to rule the state mainly due to the support of the centre. There were serious allegations of malpractices and rigging in various elections. The leadership that succeeded Sheikh Abdullah was popularly known as BBC (Bakshi, Bureaucrats and Corrupts). When Sheikh Abdullah was dethroned unconstitutionally and was put behind the bars; Bakshi Ghulam Muhammad was elevated as the Prime Minister of the state during the intervening night of 8th & 9th August 1953. After taking over; Bakshi Ghulam Muhammad invented a new mantra of corruption under the patronage of New Delhi. He tried to obtain the support of masses. People from Khanbal to Khandanyar revolted against the dismissal of their beloved leader Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah. Bakshi gauged the voice of people against the dismissal of Sheikh. He utilized the services of police and persecuted many. Thousands were put behind the bars. He gave permits of Mercedes, Trucks Lorries and Plots in prime locations just to suppress the voice of Democracy. He even made recruitments in various departments with illiterate persons especially in J& K Police (traffic) MVD, forest while ignored the educated and meritorious youth because they were not ready to pay the bribe to his men. He provided Ration on subsidiary rate of 40 paise per kg when the same rice kg was purchased by the state from the neighboring states like Punjab & other parts of India at the rate of Rs. 5 and Rs.7 per kg respectively. There was no rule of law; everyone was above the law. Religious preachers were made corrupt by offering them allowances from the government exchequer just to praise Bakshi and his ilk. He made frequent visits to revered shrines, mosques and paid so called Nazar-o-Niyaz not for the respect of these Shrines and mosques but seeking the blessing of these Mujavirs who were on the pay rolls of Government exchequer so that they will treat him Budshah of the time, which he was not. Highly qualified and talented youth if dared to raise the voice against undemocratic methods had to face the terror of Bakshi and they were put behind the bars for years together. There was no transparency or accountability in the government offices; even Mohalla Presidents, Halqa Presidents of ruling party were dictating orders and instructions to the bureaucrats and to police officers of concerned police stations. Government headed by Bakshi Ghulam Muhammad was supported rather run by bad or corrupt elements.

During most of the period between 1953 and 1974, the Congress exercised a lot of influence on the politics of the state. A truncated National Conference (minus-Sheikh Abdullah) remained in power with the active support of Congress for some time and later it merged with the Congress. Thus, the Congress party gained direct control over the government in the state. In the meanwhile, there were several attempts to reach an agreement between Sheikh Abdullah and the government of India. Finally, in 1974 Indira Gandhi reached an agreement with Sheikh Abdullah and he became the chief minister of state. He revived National Conference which was re-elected with a majority in the elections held in 1977. Sheikh Abdullah died in 1982 and the leadership of the National Conference went to his son Farooq Abdullah, who became the chief minister. But soon he was dismissed by the governor and a breakaway faction of the National Conference came to power for a brief period. B. K. Nehru (Governor of the J&K before the dismissal of Farooq Abdullah's government) said, "The Kashmiri's were convinced now at the second dethronement of their elected leader (1984) that India would never permit them to rule themselves". The feeling that centre was intervening in the politics of the state was further strengthened when the National Conference in 1986 agreed to have electoral alliance with the Congress.

### **Election of 1987, Militancy and Insurgency**

The election of 1987, 400 years after the capture of king Yusuf shah is another defining moment in the Kashmir's struggle for self-determination. It was a close fight between N.C- Congress on the one side and the Muslim United Front (MUF) on the other. The MUF was a conglomeration of various Muslim parties, which tried democratically with a manifesto to resolve the matter of Kashmir. The official results show massive victory for National Conference- Congress alliance and Farooq Abdullah returned as chief minister. But, it was widely believed that results did not reflect popular choice and the entire election process was rigged. Democratic processes were undermined at the behest of the centre and New Delhi itself allowed the rigging of most of the seats in order to keep MUF out of power. Only applicants were supported and MUF candidates were arrested before polling. Their candidates were dragged out by forces, beaten up by N.C- Congress candidates and detained under draconian laws. This outplayed rejection of opposition did nothing but fuelled the popular resentment. This generated a political crisis in Kashmir and two years later bullets came out of broken ballots. By 1989, the state had come in the grip of militant movement mobilized around the cause of a separate Kashmiri nation. Kashmiri Muslims who were quite supportive and faithful of India's rule in Kashmir in 1947 gave slogans like "Jo Maange Ga Pakistan, Usko Mile Ga Qabristan" (whosoever will demand Pakistan, will be sent to graveyard). Yet the same people after 1987 raised their heads, hands and everything against India and gave slogans like "Jeevay Jeevay Pakistan, Ragdro Ragdro Hindustan (Long live Pakistan, push back India). The insurgents got moral, material and military support from Pakistan. After the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan in 1989 which was hailed as the global victory of Mujahidin, the same were sent to Kashmir with the slogan, "*Hum Jashne Kabul Mana Chuke, Aao Chalein Kashmir Chalein*". The dissatisfied youth of Kashmir got attracted to this as revealed by Basharat Peer in his Curfewed Night that Kashmiri teenagers in the early 90's did not imitate Che Guevara and Malcolm X; militants walking the ramp of war determined the fashion trends. Hence, Pakistan under the name of Mujahidin waging war against India and India under the name of fighting infiltrators made Kashmir the most militarized zone of the world. The place where once Gandhi saw a ray of hope; bloodshed, encounters and chaos was witnessed. Since 1989, when the insurgency movement exploded, more than 70,000 people (non-combatants) have been killed in the battle or proxy war between India and Pakistan over Kashmir. Kashmiri youth who later on fully realized the fallacy of gun culture avoided that path, but till then the movement had been hijacked by the two South-Asian bullies. We have almost one million troops in Kashmir fighting insurgency, although even official records show that militancy has diminished. The Americans fought a full-fledged war in Iraq and Afghanistan with about 1, 50,000 soldiers respectively, but in Kashmir we have much more than that even in times of peace.

### **Alienation and Estrangement**

All people outside Kashmir, what they know is just that, Kashmir is an integral part and belongs to them. It is a part of their country and they will fight million battles to keep it this way. What they do not care is that if in Kashmir, the women are raped and abused every day; its youth is being oppressed every hour, the children are deprived of a peaceful and sane childhood every minute and the old are losing their dignity and once held self esteem by each moment- they just do not care. Kashmiri Muslims are highly alienated today more than ever. Their talk of self-determination although forgotten for long, but even they are denied the very basic rights of self-expression as the citizens of this country. There is a feeling among the new generation of Kashmiri Muslims that they have been treated as second class citizens in world's largest democracy. It is high time for an individual and collective introspection to try and find out, are we not responsible

for the alienation of our own people. The struggle for Azadi (freedom) has new voices and so do the brutalities committed by the Indian state in the name of guarding sovereignty and national interests. The line between sovereignty and subjugation has faded. They want Azadi and we want a hold on this strategic geo-political mass. Who is right and who is wrong? Are we really interested in the Kashmiri people or are our interests limited to Kashmir, the valley?

A large part of the problem has its birth in the Pakistan sponsored separatist movement of the 80s and 90s. But what we do not realize is the slow transition of this state sponsored separatist movement into a full-fledged struggle for Azadi by the masses of Kashmir. Cognizant ignorance of Kashmiri grievances combined with an incompetent political class has worked as a catalyst in the process of this transition. The use of force, application of draconian laws, fake encounters by security forces and apathy towards the common Kashmiri by the motherland has only given teeth to the call for Azadi. India's sovereignty and Kashmir's Azadi are at loggerheads in the valley. The human cost of this never ending war is phenomenal. The wailing of Kashmiri mothers, sisters and daughters has a deafening echo in the realms of civil society across the globe. Mainland India stands accused for this extraordinary situation. Every stone pelting Kashmiri killed by an Indian bullet gives birth to ten more protesters ready to die for the cause of Kashmiriyat. We do not realize that the role of Pakistan and of hate breeding Jehadi terrorist camps from across the border is fast diminishing. Kashmir, the proxy war with Pakistan, is near over; we are now fighting our own people – young boys and girls fuelled by failure of faith on part of India. The accusation, humiliation, torture, rape and killings have only added to the ever swelling numbers of protestors who come out to face the frustration of the motherland.

### **Burial of Kashmiriyat**

Kashmiri identity is defined in terms of *Kashmiriyat* and refers to a multiple process of absorption and accommodation of diverse cultural elements and religious practices. It evolved as an inclusive identity with distinct form, content and structure within a specific geographic location and language –Kashmiri.

This umbilical cord of Kashmiriyat which makes Kashmiri Pandits inseparable from Kashmiri Muslims, finds its clearest expression in one of the couplet of renowned state poet Peerzada Ghulam Ahmed Mahjoor;

*Hend rata'n na'aw khour waya'n ahle deen*

*Na'aw yem mulkech paknaow paan wayen*

(Hindus will keep the helm and the Muslims play the oars;

Let us together row ashore the boat of the country.)

But the period of early 90's saw several brutal killings of Kashmiri Pandits by militants across the valley. Muslim Kashmiris expressed shock and loss while recalling the sudden and silent evaporation of their Hindu brethrens from their locality. The state which was a showpiece of secularism even during the turbulent terrible times under persecuting and fanatical rulers, developed a sore on its forehead that was caused by some outside agencies in the form of eroding of a pious accord of brotherhood that still remained among its people, but the situation was certainly hijacked by those who were unhappy with a peaceful state. In that state we witnessed mass exodus of that very community under the secular democratic republic, surely shameful.

### **Papa II Interrogation Centre**

Papa II was an interrogation centre in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. It operated from the start of



Kashmir insurgency in 1989 until it was shut down in 1996. Operated by BSF, it was reported as the most “infamous torture cell in Kashmir”. It was located on Gupkar road on the banks of Dal Lake in Srinagar. A May 1996 report, by Human Rights Watch detailed allegations of abuse and torture at papa II. According to William Dalrymple, “Papa II was a centre into which large numbers of local people, as well as the occasionally captured foreign Jihadi, would “disappear”. Their bodies would later be found, if at all, floating down rivers, bruised, covered in cigarette burns, missing fingers or even whole limbs.” Extreme third degree torture which is uncivilized and unconstitutional was the norm of the day in papa II. People were made completely nude as was revealed by Zahoor Ahmed (a middle-aged man) during our field survey, “they first hit me on my face with my own slippers fifty times, then torn my clothes, my legs and arms were tied with chair and an electric rod was placed on my body.” Manzoor another survivor of papa II said, “at the interrogation centre I saw big pair of scissors. It required two hands to be used. He heated that scissor in fire and then started cutting me. My entire body was bleeding and I was all red.” Hence papa II was a torture centre where a man can neither live nor die. Boys were picked up at night, tortured in papa II but authorities always denied their arrest.

### **Ikhwan-ul-Mukhbireen: India’s forgotten Army**

In the summer of 1994, those listening in to radio-frequency conversations in Jammu and Kashmir began coming across a decidedly cryptic one. "This is Bulbul", the message would almost invariably go, "ask the Koel what song it will sing tonight." 'Bulbul', the Urdu word for the Asian song bird, was a mid-ranking military intelligence official working with troops of the 5 Rashtriya Rifles in Sumbal, near Bandipora. 'Koel', the dark-coloured Cuckoo bird, was Mohammad Yusuf Parrey, better known by his alias 'Kuka' Parrey, the folk singer-turned-terrorist-turned-pro-India-militia leader-turned-politician, who was assassinated later. 'Song' was a coded reference to details about anti-terrorist operations in the hard-hit Bandipora belt, in northern Kashmir. Parrey was part of a large group of terrorists which, marginalised by the one-track support given by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence to the Islamist Hizbul Mujahedeen, threw in its lot with the Indian security forces. In early 1994, Parrey, then the leader of the Ikhwan-ul-Mukhbireen, began cooperating with the Army.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The “ostrich syndrome” of burying our heads in the sand thinking everything is well, is not working in Kashmir. We have tried bullets. We have played the batons. The failure of force is too evident to be ignored. The monster is staring us direct in the eye. It’s time we blink. It’s time we think. The ignominy of forceful suppression in Kashmir is now beginning to show up. The bloody trail of the past few decades should be discomfiting for a nation which bears foundation of a non-violent freedom struggle. The call for Azadi or self-determination can be overlooked but can we ignore the smell of human flesh and blood? It is said that peace is not the absence of war but the presence of justice. The Kashmir valley pleads for justice. The serenity of Chasme Shahi, the blue waters of Wular Lake and the dew drops on the pines is not what makes Kashmir an integral part of India. Beating hearts, free minds, aspiring thoughts and a mist of warm breath is what Kashmir is all about. More than 800 years ago the sage and historian of Kashmir Kalhana in his immortal work Rajtarangini has observed that, “Kashmir could be conquered not through arms but through virtuous deeds”.

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